GETTING THROUGH DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Recovery Skills Foundation

Notice. Pause. Choose one safe step.

TODAY'S GOAL

Identify a simple sequence for responding without making the situation worse.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Strong emotions do not have to be solved all at once. Notice what is happening, pause, choose one safe skill, try it, and ask for support if you still feel overwhelmed.

ASK

- How do you know a moment is becoming difficult?
- What safe skill already helps you?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Rate distress from 0-10. Choose one next step: pause, breathe, ground, or talk with staff.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

You receive disappointing news. Instead of reacting right away, pause, name the feeling, choose a safe skill, and ask for support.

TEACH-BACK

What are the first two things you can do when emotions become strong?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Pause. Choose one safe next step.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Pause. Choose one safe next step.

GETTING THROUGH DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Recovery Skills Foundation

Notice. Pause. Choose one safe step.

WHAT IS IT?

Recovery skills are tools that help you move through strong emotions and difficult situations more safely.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Creates a pause before reacting
- Helps you choose a safer next step
- Reminds you that support is available

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Strong emotions
- Upsetting news
- Feeling overwhelmed

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **NOTICE what is happening**
2. PAUSE before reacting
3. CHOOSE one safe skill
4. TRY the skill
5. ASK for support

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

You receive disappointing news. Instead of reacting right away, pause, name the feeling, choose a safe skill, and ask for support.

REMEMBER

You do not have to solve everything now. Choose the next safe step.

LET'S PRACTICE

Getting Through Difficult Moments

Notice. Pause. Choose one safe step.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Rate distress from 0-10. Choose one next step: pause, breathe, ground, or talk with staff.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You are told something you did not want to hear.
☐ React immediately ☐ Pause and choose a safe skill

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

BE HERE NOW

Mindfulness

Bring attention back to this moment.

TODAY'S GOAL

Practice a simple present-moment grounding skill.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Mindfulness means noticing what is happening right now. You do not need to empty your mind or close your eyes. Bring attention to what you can see, feel, and hear.

ASK

- What do you notice around you now?
- Is your mind in the past, future, or present?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Keep eyes open if preferred. Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, and 3 you hear.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

While waiting for the treatment team, your thoughts race. Notice the chair beneath you, the room around you, and nearby sounds.

TEACH-BACK

Name one way to return attention to the present.

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Notice one thing you can see, feel, or hear.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Notice one thing you can see, feel, or hear.

BE HERE NOW

Mindfulness

Bring attention back to this moment.

WHAT IS IT?

Mindfulness means paying attention to what is happening right now, one moment at a time.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Interrupts racing thoughts
- Builds awareness before reacting
- Helps attention return to the present

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Waiting
- Worrying about the future
- Thinking about the past

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **LOOK for 5 things you see**
2. FEEL 4 points of contact
3. LISTEN for 3 sounds
4. NOTICE 2 slow breaths
5. NAME 1 helpful next step

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

While waiting for the treatment team, your thoughts race. Notice the chair beneath you, the room around you, and nearby sounds.

REMEMBER

You do not need to stop every thought. Gently come back to now.

LET'S PRACTICE

Be Here Now

Bring attention back to this moment.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Keep eyes open if preferred. Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, and 3 you hear.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

Your mind races while you wait for an update.
☐ Follow every worried thought ☐ Notice the room and your breathing

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

FINDING YOUR BALANCE

Middle Path

Two ideas can both be true.

TODAY'S GOAL

Practice balanced thinking instead of all-or-nothing conclusions.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Two things can be true at the same time. A situation can be difficult and you can still take one helpful step.

ASK

- What words signal all-or-nothing thinking?
- What could be true on both sides?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Change “Everything is terrible” to “This is hard, and one part may improve.”

UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel unheard and also recognize that staff may need time to gather information.

TEACH-BACK

Turn one extreme statement into a balanced statement.

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Add the word “and” to make room for another truth.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Add the word “and” to make room for another truth.

FINDING YOUR BALANCE

Middle Path

Two ideas can both be true.

WHAT IS IT?

Balanced thinking makes room for more than one true idea, feeling, or perspective.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Reduces extreme conclusions
- Supports flexible problem-solving
- Makes conflict easier to navigate

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Feeling stuck
- Conflict
- Words like always or never

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **NOTICE the extreme thought**
2. PAUSE before deciding
3. FIND another true detail
4. JOIN both truths with “and”
5. CHOOSE the next helpful step

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel unheard and also recognize that staff may need time to gather information.

REMEMBER **Balance does not mean agreeing. It means seeing more of the picture.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Finding Your Balance

Two ideas can both be true.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Change “Everything is terrible” to “This is hard, and one part may improve.”
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You think, “Nobody listens to me.”
☐ Keep the absolute statement ☐ Name who may listen and what you need

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

PAUSE BEFORE YOU ACT

STOP Skill

Stop. Step back. Observe. Choose.

TODAY'S GOAL

Use STOP to create space before acting on an urge.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

STOP creates a short pause between a strong urge and your next action. The pause gives you more choices.

ASK

- What tells you an urge is getting stronger?
- What helps you step back safely?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Think of a mild frustration. Practice STOP slowly, one step at a time.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel angry after a limit is set. Stop, take a step back, observe the urge, and proceed with a safer choice.

TEACH-BACK

What does each letter in STOP remind you to do?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Start with only the first step: Stop.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Start with only the first step: Stop.

PAUSE BEFORE YOU ACT

STOP Skill

Stop. Step back. Observe. Choose.

WHAT IS IT?

STOP is a skill for creating a pause before you react.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Slows impulsive reactions
- Helps you notice urges
- Creates time for a safer choice

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Anger rises
- You want to leave or argue
- You feel pressured

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **STOP - do not act yet**
2. TAKE a step back
3. OBSERVE thoughts, feelings, and urges
4. PROCEED mindfully

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel angry after a limit is set. Stop, take a step back, observe the urge, and proceed with a safer choice.

REMEMBER

STOP does not erase the emotion. It gives you time to choose.

LET'S PRACTICE

Pause Before You Act

Stop. Step back. Observe. Choose.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Think of a mild frustration. Practice STOP slowly, one step at a time.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

Someone says something upsetting during group.
☐ Respond immediately ☐ Use STOP before deciding what to do

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____

_____

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

CALM YOUR BODY

TIPP-Inspired Skills

When the body slows down, thinking may get easier.

TODAY'S GOAL

Practice safe body-based strategies for intense emotional arousal.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Strong emotions affect the body. Safe cooling, paced breathing, and brief movement may help the body settle.

ASK

- Where do you notice stress in your body?
- Which calming option feels safe today?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Try paced breathing: inhale gently for 4, exhale slowly for 6. Repeat four times.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

Your heart is racing after a difficult call. Sit safely, slow the exhale, and tell staff if symptoms feel unusual.

TEACH-BACK

Name one safe way to help your body slow down.

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Choose only gentle breathing, or ask staff for another option.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Choose only gentle breathing, or ask staff for another option.

CALM YOUR BODY

TIPP-Inspired Skills

When the body slows down, thinking may get easier.

WHAT IS IT?

Body-based calming skills can reduce emotional intensity enough to make the next decision easier.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Lowers physical tension
- Supports slower breathing
- Creates space to think

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Body feels activated
- Panic sensations
- Strong urges

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **PAUSE and sit safely**
2. COOL with a cloth on face or hands
3. MOVE gently if appropriate
4. BREATHE out longer than in
5. CHECK in with staff if unsure

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

Your heart is racing after a difficult call. Sit safely, slow the exhale, and tell staff if symptoms feel unusual.

REMEMBER **Use gentle options. Stop and tell staff if you feel dizzy, faint, short of breath, or unwell.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Calm Your Body

When the body slows down, thinking may get easier.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Try paced breathing: inhale gently for 4, exhale slowly for 6. Repeat four times.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You feel shaky and tense after a stressful conversation.
☐ Push through worsening symptoms ☐ Use a gentle skill and check with staff

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

COMFORT THROUGH YOUR SENSES

Self-Soothing

Use sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste.

TODAY'S GOAL

Identify safe sensory choices that support calm.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Your senses can send calming signals to your attention. Choose something safe, available, and comfortable.

ASK

- Which sense helps you feel grounded?
- What sensory input feels unpleasant or unsafe?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Choose one available sensory item. Notice it slowly for 30 seconds.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

The unit feels noisy. You focus on a warm drink, a soft blanket, or a quiet visual detail when available.

TEACH-BACK

Which sense will you use first?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Pick one neutral detail instead of something strongly soothing.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Pick one neutral detail instead of something strongly soothing.

COMFORT THROUGH YOUR SENSES

Self-Soothing

Use sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste.

WHAT IS IT?

Self-soothing uses safe sensory experiences to comfort the body and focus attention.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Redirects attention
- Supports calming
- Builds a personal coping menu

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Restlessness
- Waiting
- After a stressful event

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **CHOOSE one sense**
2. FIND a safe option
3. NOTICE details slowly
4. RATE distress again
5. KEEP what helps

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

The unit feels noisy. You focus on a warm drink, a soft blanket, or a quiet visual detail when available.

REMEMBER

Comfort does not have to be intense. Small, safe comforts count.

LET'S PRACTICE

Comfort Through Your Senses

Use sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Choose one available sensory item. Notice it slowly for 30 seconds.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You feel restless while waiting for the next activity.
☐ Focus only on discomfort ☐ Try one safe sensory option

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

UNDERSTANDING MY EMOTIONS

Emotion Awareness

Name it. Notice it. Choose what helps.

TODAY'S GOAL

Identify an emotion, its intensity, and the need beneath it.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Emotions give information. Naming an emotion can make it easier to understand what your body needs and what action may help.

ASK

- What emotion is present?
- Where do you feel it in your body?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Choose one emotion word. Rate its intensity from 0-10 and name one body signal.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

You notice tight shoulders, fast thoughts, and an urge to leave. You name anxiety and ask what might help.

TEACH-BACK

What are three clues that help identify an emotion?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Start with broad words: okay, sad, angry, afraid, or confused.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Start with broad words: okay, sad, angry, afraid, or confused.

UNDERSTANDING MY EMOTIONS

Emotion Awareness

Name it. Notice it. Choose what helps.

WHAT IS IT?

Emotion awareness means noticing feelings, body signals, thoughts, and urges without judging yourself.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Makes feelings easier to describe
- Helps identify needs
- Supports safer choices

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Mood shifts
- You feel confused
- An urge becomes strong

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **NAME the emotion**
2. RATE its intensity
3. NOTICE body signals
4. IDENTIFY the urge
5. CHOOSE what may help

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

You notice tight shoulders, fast thoughts, and an urge to leave. You name anxiety and ask what might help.

REMEMBER **An emotion is information. It does not have to make the decision for you.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Understanding My Emotions

Name it. Notice it. Choose what helps.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Choose one emotion word. Rate its intensity from 0-10 and name one body signal.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

Your shoulders tighten and you want to leave the room.
☐ Judge yourself ☐ Name the emotion and choose support

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

THOUGHT OR FACT?

Check the Facts

A thought can feel true without being a fact.

TODAY'S GOAL

Separate observations from interpretations.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Thoughts can be powerful, but they are not always facts. Check what you directly know and what you may be assuming.

ASK

- What did you directly observe?
- What are you assuming or predicting?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Use: “The fact I know is…” and “The story my mind adds is…”

UNIT A EXAMPLE

A staff member walks past. Fact: they did not stop. Interpretation: they are ignoring me. Other possibilities may exist.

TEACH-BACK

How is a fact different from an interpretation?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Name only what a camera could see or hear.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Name only what a camera could see or hear.

THOUGHT OR FACT?

Check the Facts

A thought can feel true without being a fact.

WHAT IS IT?

Checking the facts helps separate observable information from assumptions and predictions.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Reduces quick conclusions
- Supports clearer communication
- Helps emotions match the situation

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- You feel rejected
- You predict the worst
- Conflict develops

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **DESCRIBE what happened**
2. REMOVE judgment words
3. NAME your interpretation
4. LOOK for other explanations
5. CHOOSE a response based on facts

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

A staff member walks past. Fact: they did not stop. Interpretation: they are ignoring me. Other possibilities may exist.

REMEMBER **Checking facts does not dismiss feelings. It helps you respond to what you know.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Thought or Fact?

A thought can feel true without being a fact.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Use: “The fact I know is…” and “The story my mind adds is…”
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

Someone walks past without speaking to you.
☐ Assume they are rejecting you ☐ Describe the fact and consider alternatives

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____

_____

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

CHOOSE A HELPFUL ACTION

Opposite Action

Check the facts. Choose the action that helps.

TODAY'S GOAL

Select an action that moves toward a goal when an emotion-driven urge is unhelpful.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

Emotions create action urges. When the emotion or its intensity does not fit the facts, a different action may help.

ASK

- What is the emotion asking you to do?
- Would that action help your goal?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Name the urge, check the facts, then choose one small action that moves in the helpful direction.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel ashamed and want to isolate. After checking the facts, you choose to attend part of group or speak with staff.

TEACH-BACK

When should you consider an opposite action?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Choose a very small step, not the biggest possible action.

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Choose a very small step, not the biggest possible action.

CHOOSE A HELPFUL ACTION

Opposite Action

Check the facts. Choose the action that helps.

WHAT IS IT?

Opposite Action means choosing a helpful behavior that differs from an unhelpful emotion-driven urge.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Interrupts avoidance
- Builds new patterns
- Supports goal-directed behavior

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- The urge is unhelpful
- Emotion is too intense for the facts
- Avoidance keeps a problem going

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **NAME the emotion and urge**
2. CHECK the facts
3. IDENTIFY your goal
4. CHOOSE a small helpful opposite
5. DO it fully and reassess

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

You feel ashamed and want to isolate. After checking the facts, you choose to attend part of group or speak with staff.

REMEMBER **Do not use Opposite Action when the emotion fits a real safety threat. Seek help instead.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Choose a Helpful Action

Check the facts. Choose the action that helps.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Name the urge, check the facts, then choose one small action that moves in the helpful direction.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You want to avoid everyone because you feel embarrassed.
☐ Isolate all day ☐ Take one safe step toward support

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____

_____

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

DEAR MAN

Be clear, respectful, and focused.

TODAY'S GOAL

Use a structured request while maintaining self-respect and respect for others.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE

A clear request says what happened, how you feel, what you want, and why it may help. Stay focused and be willing to negotiate.

ASK

- What do you want to ask for?
- What facts are important to describe?

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Create one short request using Describe, Express, Assert or Ask, and Reinforce.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

“The room has been noisy. I feel overwhelmed. Could I use a quieter space for ten minutes? It may help me return to group.”

TEACH-BACK

What makes a request clear and respectful?

IF THE PATIENT IS STRUGGLING

Write only one sentence: “I need ___ because ___.”

DOCUMENTATION CUE

Use the existing APeX Nursing Group Note. Document observable attendance, participation, skill practice, response, and understanding. Avoid duplicate charting.

60-SECOND VERSION

Write only one sentence: “I need ___ because ___.”

ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

DEAR MAN

Be clear, respectful, and focused.

WHAT IS IT?

DEAR MAN is a structure for asking for what you need clearly, respectfully, and effectively.

WHY CAN IT HELP?

- Organizes a request
- Reduces mixed messages
- Helps you stay focused

WHEN CAN I USE IT?

- Making a request
- Setting a boundary
- Solving a disagreement

HOW DO I DO IT?

1. **DESCRIBE the facts**
2. EXPRESS how you feel
3. ASSERT or ASK clearly
4. REINFORCE why it helps
5. Stay MINDFUL, APPEAR confident, NEGOTIATE

SIMPLE UNIT A EXAMPLE

“The room has been noisy. I feel overwhelmed. Could I use a quieter space for ten minutes? It may help me return to group.”

REMEMBER **A clear request improves communication, even when the answer is not yes.**

LET'S PRACTICE

Ask for What You Need

Be clear, respectful, and focused.

1 • CHECK IN

How do I feel now? ☐ Calm ☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Anxious ☐ Frustrated ☐ Overwhelmed
Intensity: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 • TRY THE SKILL

Create one short request using Describe, Express, Assert or Ask, and Reinforce.
What I noticed: _____

3 • REAL-LIFE PRACTICE

You need a quieter place for a short time.
☐ Hint and hope someone understands ☐ Make a direct, respectful request

4 • MAKE IT MINE

When I feel _____

I can try _____

I can ask _____ for support.

5 • TEACH IT BACK

This skill can help me:

_____
_
_____
_

USE IT TODAY

☐ During group ☐ While waiting
☐ Strong emotions ☐ Conversation
☐ Before reacting

ONE THING I WANT TO REMEMBER:

_____

CHOOSE THE NEXT SAFE STEP

Recovery Skills Quick Reference

Notice • Pause • Choose • Try • Ask

THE PATHWAY

1 NOTICE what is happening
2 PAUSE before reacting
3 CHOOSE one safe skill
4 TRY the skill
5 ASK staff for support when needed

SKILLS I CAN CHOOSE

☐ Slow breathing ☐ Grounding ☐ STOP
☐ Sensory comfort ☐ Check the facts
☐ Helpful action ☐ Talk with staff

MY PLAN

When distress reaches ____ / 10, I will try _____.
If that does not help, I will ask _____ for support.

SAFETY REMINDER

If you feel unable to stay safe, tell staff right away.

COME BACK TO THE PRESENT

5-4-3 Grounding Card

Look • Feel • Listen

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN IF YOU PREFER

You are in control of how you participate. You may pause, choose fewer items, or ask staff for another grounding option.

5 THINGS I CAN SEE

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

4 THINGS I CAN FEEL

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____

3 THINGS I CAN HEAR

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

CHECK AGAIN

Distress before: ____ / 10 Distress after: ____ / 10
One thing that helped: _____

PAUSE BEFORE YOU ACT

STOP Pocket Reference

Create space for a safer choice

S • STOP

Do not act on the urge yet. Pause your words and movement if safe.

T • TAKE A STEP BACK

Create a little distance. Sit down, breathe, or ask for a moment.

O • OBSERVE

Notice thoughts, emotions, body signals, urges, and what is happening around you.

P • PROCEED MINDFULLY

Ask: “What choice supports safety and my goal?” Then take one small step.

UNIT A EXAMPLE

A limit is set and anger rises. STOP before responding, notice the urge to argue, and choose to ask one clear question.

CALM YOUR BODY SAFELY

Gentle TIPP-Inspired Practice

Slow the body • Make room to think

CHOOSE ONE GENTLE OPTION

☐ Cool cloth on face or hands
☐ Brief, gentle movement if appropriate
☐ Inhale 4 • Exhale 6, repeated four times
☐ Relax shoulders, jaw, and hands

CHECK BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Ask staff if you have medical concerns, mobility limitations, breathing problems, dizziness, pain, or are unsure whether an activity is safe.

PRACTICE PACED BREATHING

Breathe in gently: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4
Breathe out slowly: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6
Do not hold your breath or force the pace.

STOP AND TELL STAFF

Stop if you feel dizzy, faint, short of breath, have chest pain, or feel unwell.

ASK CLEARLY AND RESPECTFULLY

DEAR MAN Planner

Describe • Express • Ask • Reinforce

D • DESCRIBE

The facts are: _____

E • EXPRESS

I feel: _____

A • ASSERT OR ASK

I would like / I need: _____

R • REINFORCE

This may help because: _____

STAY FOCUSED

M • Be mindful of your goal
A • Use a steady voice and posture
N • Negotiate when appropriate

MY COMPLETE REQUEST

_____
_____